

## **Revelation 20–22: 1,000 Years, Judgment, New Heaven/Earth/Jerusalem**

### **2024 Winter Series | Galena church of Christ**

Welcome

Review

- Revelation is written to seven churches in Asia, many of whom are suffering or are about to suffer.
- Revelation is apocalyptic literature, pulling back the curtain to see what's going on in the spiritual realm, using lots of sensational and symbolic imagery (stock imagery to apocalyptic literature).
- Revelation contains information intended for the original audience at the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century concerning things that were about to happen, in connection with their suffering ("How long, O Lord?!" 6:10), especially the punishment of their persecutors.
- Revelation is painting a tapestry of various cyclical and recursive visions / scenes that describe the same event(s) but with different imagery. (Perhaps with the end of each cycle extending more and more into the future from the time of the original audience (though the beginning of each cycle goes back to their time); for example, the early visions included judgments that were not complete (God giving the persecutors time to repent), as the visions continue judgment becomes more complete, so that by the end of chapter 19 the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire that is later identified at the end of chapter 20:10, 14–15 as the second and eternal death. [I'm still studying this.]

Introduction

- Tonight, we're covering chapters 20–22, with the following sections:
  - o Rev 20:1–10, The 1,000 Years
  - o Rev 20:11–15, The Great White Throne and Final Judgment
  - o Rev 21:1–8, The New Heaven and Earth
  - o Rev 21:9–22:5, The New Jerusalem
  - o Rev 22:6–21, Jesus Is Coming!
- Several connections between Revelation 20–22 and Ezekiel 37–48.
- I'm going to try to spend only 7 or 8 minutes with each section (hold on!), and after each section provide some time for brief questions / clarifications (big questions are for next week).

### **Rev 20:1–10, The 1,000 Years**

- "Here we have the famous millennial text, certainly the most debated text in the book of Revelation" (Schreiner). And the debates have not just been in since the 1800s (with the introduction of dispensational premillennialism). These debates have been going on since the book of Revelation

was delivered to the seven churches, or at least very near then. We have written records of disagreements among Christians in the second century, less than 50 years after (see Eusebius's discussion of Papias in his *Church History* 3.39).

- Even among people affiliated in some way with the Restoration Movement / Stone-Campbell Movement, there have been disagreements and differences of opinion as to the interpretation and application of this text. Before Foy E. Wallace Jr. became the editor of the *Gospel Advocate* (in the late 1920s), brethren with differing views on this passage lived together in harmony without dividing over these differences.
- I say this to encourage us not to be so quick to be dismissive of opinions of interpretation that might differ from our current interpretation. It is good to discuss and debate these issues, but perhaps we would do well to go back to before Foy E. Wallace Jr. told us we need to divide over them and not be divisive over these issues. To give Foy E. Wallace Jr. some positive credit, at one point later on in a rare recording of a sermon of his you can find online, he makes the statement to the effect that no one really knows what the end of the world is going to be like or what the judgment or eternity with God is going to be like. He went on to say that if God planned to take us to another planet and that is where we would spend eternity with him, that is just fine with me, so long as I am with God.
- The 1,000 years begins when satan is bound (v2), so when was he bound? Matthew 12:29 (cf. John 12:31); Hebrews 2:14 (cf. 1 Corinthians 15; 1 John 3:8) = in the work of Jesus in his DBR. The deceiving of the nations (v3) is probably a reference to the gentiles / nations during the time of the Old Testament who were not a part of God's covenant (cf. Acts 17:30; Romans 1:18ff; Ephesians 4:18; 1 Peter 1:14).
- Those seated on the thrones (v4) are either the apostles (Matthew 19:28) or all saints (Ephesians 2:6); compare the 1,000 years reigning (v6, that's what you do on a throne) here with the reigning forever and ever in 22:5. The 1,000 years is an indefinite time between the work of Jesus in his DBR and his second coming at the end of time, at which time the final Judgment will take place.
- The "first resurrection" (vv5-6) is the resurrection from spiritual death (John 5:25; Romans 6; Ephesians 2:1ff; Colossians 2:8-3:1ff; etc.).
- At the end of the 1,000 years (vv7-9) satan is released and attempts to deceive the nations, gathering Gog and Magog with an innumerable number to attack the camp and city of the saints (the church). However, before any battle takes place, satan is destroyed (v9)!
- This ends with the unholy / evil trinity spending eternity together in hell fire (v10; cf. Matthew 25:41).

### **Rev 20:11-15, The Great White Throne and Final Judgment**

- This section describes the judgment against those who did not experience the first resurrection by following Jesus. In the immediate context, these would be those who followed the beast or the false prophet instead of Jesus.

- This would have served as a warning for the Christians that made up the original audience (and any reader since then) to not be deceived by the beast, the false prophet, or any other attempts by the devil, and instead to be willing to endure the persecution and suffering that comes with following Jesus so that they would avoid this “second death” and instead experience the “second resurrection” (implied from the “first resurrection” earlier) described in the next section.

### **Rev 21:1–8, The New Heaven and Earth**

- This is describing a new dwelling of God’s people, new as in contrast with the old, “in the sense that what is old has become obsolete, and should be replaced by what is new. In such a case, the new is, as a rule, superior in kind to the old” (BDAG); like the new covenant in Christ is superior to the old covenant of Moses. Cf. 2 Peter 3 (heaven and earth before the flood, current heaven and earth between flood and Jesus’s second coming, and a new heaven(s) and earth where we will spend eternity with God, see below).
- “The sea was no more”; in ANE (the world of the OT) and 1<sup>st</sup> century Greco-Roman worldviews, the sea was the source of chaos (the opposite of God’s good creation) and evil, cf. Rev 13:1; Daniel 7:3.
- The holy city, new Jerusalem (next section). But notice that it comes down out of heaven to the new heaven and earth.
- God comes to dwell with humanity in the new heaven and new earth (v3). Heaven is simply a way to describe where God dwells. Before the fall of Genesis 3, heaven and earth co-existed. Since the fall heaven and earth have been separated into realms. When Jesus returns, in the new heaven and new earth, God will dwell with us, and heaven and earth will once again co-exist.
- Verse 4 describes such wonderful blessings we have to look forward to!
- Verse 8 describes those who will NOT experience these blessings.

### **Rev 21:9–22:5, The New Jerusalem**

- This is another vision of the new Jerusalem coming down that was mentioned in 21:2. One of the seven angels that were mentioned earlier (cf. 15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1).
- The New Jerusalem is the Bride, the church, but also seems to be the dwelling place of the church.
- Cubed dimensions of 12,000 stadia = 1,380 miles (meaning even the height of the walls!).
- Lots of references to 12.
- Twelve gates = 12 tribes of Israel; 12 foundations = 12 apostles (inclusive of the church) = God’s people of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
- All of the jewels and stones have cool connections to the Garden of Eden, the tabernacle, the temple, and to Jewish literature of the Second Temple period / Intertestamental period (esp. see 1 Enoch and *Joseph and Aseneth*, especially Aseneth’s conversion and their marriage).

- 21:27: warning and invitation.
- 22:2, “tree of life” = Garden of Eden; cf. vv10, 19; 2:7; Genesis 2:9.
- This place, the new heaven and new earth with the city of God, the New Jerusalem, is where we should all want to be! This description is given to make us all want to go there. Those who go there and spend eternity there are those who accept the invitation of Jesus (see next section). Those who do not suffer with Jesus, however, will not.

### **Rev 22:6–21, Jesus Is Coming!**

- The word “come/coming” is used seven times in this section: vv7, 12, 17 (3x), 20 (2x). Some of these references are to Jesus coming in judgment against the persecutors of the audience (v12). Others of these are invitations for any and all to come to Christ and to suffer with him until he returns bringing with him the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem.
- Note the emphasis on the things written in this book “must soon take place” (v6) and “the time is near” (v10); cf. 1:1, 3; 4:1.